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Carter Sanctions Use of Reporters As CIA Helpers

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President Carter, in an interview made public yesterday by the White House, endorsed using reporters as CIA operatives overseas under "extreme circumstances" involving U.S. security.

The use of journalists by the Central Intelligence Agency is a sensitive issue. News media officials have complained that the practice endangers all correspondents abroad and casts suspicion on them.

The president was asked about CIA Director Stansfield Turner's disclosure last Thursday that on three occasions in the past three years American journalists were approached by the CIA and agreed to cooperate. None of those covert actions was ever carried out, however, Turner said.

"In a rapidly changing international situation where, on occasion, our nation's own security or existence might be threatened, we do not want to publicly foreclose the option of taking certain action that might be necessary," Carter told a group of editors and broadcasters at the White House.

"I think Adm. Turner expressed the policy accurately," Carter said.

"We are not now using any newspeople," he said. "This would be done under only extreme circumstances and the personal approval of either Adm. Turner or myself would be required."

The president prefaced his remarks by noting that "we have a question, obviously, on how to announce publicly what we will and will not do, and there is a similar question with people like clergymen or school teachers and others."

Press secretary Jody Powell said the president's remarks applied only to the use of reporters. Powell acknowledged that he himself could "see it as a problem. But on balance, I do not see that because someone happens to be a reporter that there should be a law saying they . . . should not act in the interests of national security."